

Andy Birkey, *Minnesota Independent*

Despite coming from opposite ends of the political spectrum, Reps. Michele Bachmann and Betty McCollum have found something to agree on: that President Obama's compromise with Republicans over extending tax cuts and unemployment benefits is a bad idea. McCollum said that the plan does little to help middle-class families, while Bachmann complains that an extension of jobless benefits will add to the deficit. Rep. Keith Ellison, as part of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, also weighed in on the measure.

"This is a deal that will continue to explode the deficit while the rich get richer and struggling middle-class families get crumbs," said McCollum, who says she'll cast a no vote. "The Republicans successfully held unemployed Americans hostage to give even more tax cuts to millionaires and billionaires. This plan is irresponsible, and I will oppose it."

Bachmann said that the Bush tax cuts should be made permanent.

"Certainty must be provided to individuals, businesses large and small, farmers, and everyone impacted by the tax code," she said. "I called for the current tax rates to be made permanent for all Americans, but it appears a compromise for a two-year extension will be the temporary solution."

The 6th Congressional District Republican said she would not support an extension of unemployment benefits if they aren't paid for. (The extension of Bush tax cuts are not paid for either, as Sen. Al Franken noted over the weekend).

"As part of the compromise, the President wants to extend unemployment benefits for another 13 months," Bachmann said. "Unemployment benefits are already at a historical length of 99 weeks, and the President's request would push benefits to three years. The President hasn't indicated any other spending offsets or reductions to pay for these benefits, even though he claims to be committed to reducing the deficit."

Rep. Keith Ellison, along with fellow Congressional Progressive Caucus co-chair Raul M. Grijalva, released this statement about the tax cut deal:

We call on our Congressional leaders in the House and Senate to hold firm on passing a middle class tax cut with no strings attached. We also call on Congressional Republicans to stop using unemployed Americans as bargaining chips in exchange for another tax break for the wealthy.

Tax breaks for billionaires don't create jobs. The George W. Bush Presidency and the Republican recession are proof of that. Giving rich people more money just for being rich does nothing to help the economy, in fact, serves only to exacerbate our problems. No amount of Republican rhetoric can change that fact.

We simply cannot afford to borrow another \$700 billion to give tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires who aren't paying their fair share, especially when there are millions of Americans still looking for work. Just 1 percent of that \$700 billion would pay for almost 142,000 elementary school teachers for an entire year. That money should be used to create jobs, rebuild our infrastructure, and educate our children - not for the wealthy to buy more yachts.

We agree with the President that there is no time to delay - the recovery is fragile, and American families are hurting. We need to make the right decisions right now to boost our economy. The unemployment crisis is a harsh reality for millions of Americans and giving more money to the super rich won't do anything to solve it.

This holiday season should be about supporting middle class Americans, not another taxpayer funded present for the wealthy.